

# I GOT SUNSHINE

Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino offers a happy-go-lucky dollar-stretching vacay



With crystal blue waters, sugary sand and sunny weather, it's easy to imagine yourself in Aruba.



Escape the buzz of Atlanta for some pool time.

BY HOPE S. PHILBRICK

**W**e get it: You greeted 2009 with less job security (if you're lucky enough to still have a job), less income (ditto), and less money in your 401(k) than you had a year ago. But you've got more stress and so you need to make the most of what little vacation time you have available. To get the most value for your dollar, choosing the right vacation destination is more important than ever. We found a place that just might soothe your soul and your wallet. Read on for the 10 highlights we noted about Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino:

**1 Easy Access.** Delta's non-stop four-hour flights to Aruba from Atlanta mean you can start the vacation quickly. What's more, the Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino is located just seven miles from Queen Beatrix International Airport, so the time between landing and sinking your feet into white sand is brief.

**2 New.** A \$50 million renovation was completed in 2008. "Virtually every element of the hotel has been refreshed, rejuvenated, redesigned or revitalized," says general manager Rick Zeolla. "For all intents and purposes, the hotel is brand new." From the lobby to the top floor,

sleek finishes and state-of-the-art features give the place a first-class vibe.

**3 Space & Luxury.** All 411 guest rooms (including 20 ocean view suites) are at least 500 square feet in size—the most spacious of any hotel on the island. What's more, every room has a 100-square-foot balcony with views of the Caribbean Sea. Beyond the space to sprawl, inside each room you'll find features like LCD TVs, plush bedding, contemporary bathroom fixtures and rain-style showerheads.

**4 First Class.** The top floor is designated as the Tradewinds Club, a "hotel within a hotel" concept that offers exclusive amenities and privileges like private check-in, upgraded bath products, free Internet access, access to a private lounge with five complimentary food and beverage services daily, an evening open bar, packing and unpacking services, a pillow menu and more. Upgrade your stay, and feel like a millionaire.

**5 Delicious.** The resort offers seven different restaurants and cafés, so you don't have to get out of your swimming suit to satisfy any craving, whether it's comfort food or creative concoctions. Find familiar favorites on the menu at Ruth's Chris Steak-

house or Champions Sports Bar and Restaurant. Or sample local fare at Simply Fish, Waves or the Lobby Bar—don't miss the aloe martini!



Are you lucky?

PHOTOS/COURTESY OF ARUBA MARRIOTT RESORT & STELLARIS CASINO

**6 Refresh.** The 6,500-square foot Mandara Spa boasts eight treatment rooms for individuals and four more for couples. Treatments range from teeth-whitening and micro-dermabrasion to massage and aromatherapy baths. The Aruba Spa Sampler combines a footbath, salt scrub and massage for 90 minutes of pure bliss.

**7 Float, Dive & Surf.** Whether you swim up to the pool bar or body surf in the turquoise ocean waves, water helps release stress. With its free-form pool featuring several cascading waterfalls and seven-mile stretch of spectacular beachfront, the vista at the resort offers a constant reminder that you're not in Atlanta anymore—even if you choose not to get wet.

**8 Tempt Lady Luck.** Stellaris, the largest casino in Aruba, boasts 500 slot machines and 32 gaming tables. Play things right

and that game of blackjack, roulette, craps, Caribbean Stud Poker or Let It Ride Poker just may enrich your bank account.

**9 Play.** Constant trade winds make Aruba ideal for sports like kite surfing, windsurfing and sailing. Other popular activities include beach tennis, sport fishing, snorkeling, scuba diving, aquarobics and more. Need help? Professional instruction is available from the folks at Red Sail Sports on the resort's beach or at the nearby Vela Highwinds Center.

**10 Experience Aruba.** A Dutch island just 15 miles off the coast of Venezuela, Aruba's culture blends European and Latin influences. Nothing says "vacation" like the tropics. With an average year-round temperature of 82 degrees F. and typically dry climate, the weather is just one less thing you'll have to worry about. **SP**

## IF YOU GO

### MORE INFORMATION

■ **Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino**  
800-223-6388  
www.arubamarriott.com

### OFF THE RESORT

■ **Where to Eat**  
Pinchos Grill and Bar  
297-583-2666  
www.interreps.nl/pinchos.htm  
■ **What to do**  
De Palm Tours / Jeep Tour  
www.depalm.com